



## 2016 Commencement Honors Near-Record Number of Graduates

This year's number of awards is among the highest granted at commencement. UAS awarded 755 associate, bachelor, and master's degrees along with occupational endorsements, certificates, and professional licensures at commencement ceremonies April 29, 30 and May 1. Awards were granted to graduates from the Juneau, Ketchikan, and Sitka campuses. "We are enormously proud of the accomplishments of these UAS graduates," said Chancellor Rick Caulfield. "Many are first-generation college students—the first in their family to achieve this level of education. Others are older non-traditional students who are already employed and raising a family but are working hard to improve their education, their skills, and the well-being of their families."

## An Aak'w Kwaan Welcome



*Aak'w Kwaan elders Rosa Miller and Frances Houston led the Juneau commencement procession*

The Juneau campus procession was led by a large local group of Tlingit dancers and drummers. Aak'w Kwaan elders Rosa Miller and Frances Houston gave a traditional Tlingit welcome. "We were honored to start a proud new tradition—having the Mount Juneau Tlingit Dancers lead our procession and a traditional welcome by Elders of the Aak'w Kwaan people," said Chancellor Rick Caulfield. "The spirited singing and dancing was a fitting way to honor both the accomplishments of all our graduates and the rich indigenous cultures of Southeast Alaska."

## UAS Faculty Speaks at Kenai College

Assistant Professor of Public Administration Dr. Jim Powell was the speaker for the 46th annual Kenai Peninsula College commencement ceremony, held May 5 at Kenai Central High School's Renée C. Henderson Auditorium. "I believe that a good education is one of the most important things in life, and it was a real honor to be asked to speak at the Kenai Peninsula College commencement ceremony," said Powell.



*Student commencement speaker Jasper Nelson got the crowd chuckling*

## Student Commencement Speaker is Committed to Teaching in Rural Alaska

This year's Juneau student commencement speaker represents the best of UAS. Jasper Nelson is on the fast track to return to his home town as a biology teacher. He graduated with his Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) with an endorsement in Biology. In 2015, Jasper earned a Bachelor of Science in Biology at UAS. Of Tsimshian heritage, Jasper was born in Ketchikan and grew up in Craig, on Prince of Wales Island. For his MAT student teaching experience, Jasper taught chemistry and biology to Thunder Mountain High School students. Alaska Native educator Angie Lunda, who nominated Jasper as student speaker, noted that "through his deep knowledge of Southeast Alaska and his content area, his use of humor in his lessons, and his genuine caring for all students, Jasper and his mentor teacher built an engaging and rigorous biology program for the students in their TMHS class of 2016." Jasper earned a big laugh from the commencement audience when he said, "I'm no longer that chubby kid with the backpack full of zoo books. I'm that chubby teacher with a backpack full of science journals." Said Chancellor Rick Caulfield, "Jasper Nelson epitomizes why UAS exists—to enable young Alaskans of diverse cultural backgrounds to fulfill their dreams and ambitions. His hope is to return to Craig next year as a certified teacher."

## Outstanding Graduates Featured on Website



UAS honored several students with the 5th annual Outstanding Graduate Awards. See outstanding graduate stories, faculty support statements and photos at the Outstanding Grads website: [uas.alaska.edu/celebrating-grads/index.html](http://uas.alaska.edu/celebrating-grads/index.html).

*Brittini Lee Wisner, Outstanding Graduate, English. Hometown: Palmer, Alaska*



*Staff members presented ideas for improving everything from student recruitment to internal communication at Staff Development Day, May 12, 2016*

## UAS Staff Council: Discovering Opportunities Through Change

UAS governance groups including Staff Council, Faculty Senate and Student Government have all held recent sessions to discuss proposed changes to the UA system due to pending budget cuts. At the annual Staff Development and Appreciation Day May 12 in the Egan Library, staff brainstormed opportunities for positive outcomes through the Strategic Pathways initiative.

## Ketchikan Faculty Bill Urquhart Honored

### Faculty Excellence Award for "extensive service commitments" to UAS and community.

Ketchikan Assistant Professor of Sociology, William Urquhart, Ph.D., received the service award presented at Faculty Excellence Awards May 2. During his six years at the UAS Ketchikan campus, Dr. Urquhart has gained the respect of his colleagues for his extensive service commitments – both to the University and throughout his community. He is known as hard-working, productive, and generous with his time to help faculty and students – even outside of his own programs. Dr. Urquhart's many university service opportunities include hiring committees, representing the Social Sciences department on the Curriculum Committee, mentoring new faculty, Title III principal Investigator, and spearheading the implementation of a new BA in Social Science degree available for distance delivery (just to name a few). In his home community of Ketchikan, Bill offers free bagpiping lessons, and presents a multicultural music and dance series at Tongass School of Arts and Sciences.



*William Urquhart, Ph.D.*

Urquhart is one of four recipients of the annual awards. Other winners were Juneau faculty Karen Mitchell (English) in the adjunct category, Jason Amundson (Environmental Science) for research, and retiring Biology faculty Johanna Fagen for teaching. Winners were chosen through letters of support from UAS faculty, staff, research colleagues, students or community members.

## UAS Partners to Enhance Music Education in Alaska



*Strings for Scholarships All Cello Concert in the Egan Library, Saturday, April 30, 2016*

In collaboration with Juneau Alaska Music Matters, the Office of Development has announced the creation of a new scholarship fund for Master of Arts in Teaching students, the UAS MAT-JAMM Scholarship Fund. A recent fundraiser garnered \$1336.50 in contributions. The first Strings for Scholarships All Cello Concert was held Saturday, April 30 at the Egan Library. The purpose of the fund is to provide financial assistance for tuition and other related educational expenses to UAS students who are also string musicians and pursuing a Secondary Master of Arts in Teaching or a Secondary Graduate Certificate. Both programs result in certification to teach music in grades K-12.

## Inuksuit: A Juneau Musical Premiere Like No Other

The Juneau campus was the site of the Alaskan premiere of *Inuksuit*, by former Fairbanks resident and Pulitzer Prize winning composer John Luther Adams. Described by the *New York Times* as "the ultimate environmental piece," it involved many players (largely percussion) dispersed through the outdoors around UAS Juneau on Saturday, May 21. "Each performance of *Inuksuit* is different," Adams has said of the piece, "determined by the size of the ensemble, the specific instruments used, the topology and vegetation of the site, and even by the songs of local birds." Unlike most of the other performances, the UAS *Inuksuit* was performed by local musicians. The event was part of the annual Juneau Jazz & Classics festival. Artists-in-Residence Sean Connors of Third Coast Percussion organized the performance. *Inuksuit* is a truly unique performance experience. It is at once an intricately structured concert work, a beautifully hypnotic sound installation, an interactive work of performance art, and a communal music making event like no other," said Connors. "It is not everyday that you can gather a large group of people together that are all excited about making a truly groundbreaking piece of art."